

# 2017 International Essay Contest for Young People

## List of Winners

Theme: "Learning from Nature"

No. of participating countries: 155

No. of entries: 15,441 (Children's category: 4,938 / Youth category: 10,503)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Learning from Nature*  
Neda Simic (Age 12, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

#### Youth category (1 entrant)

- *The Mulberry and Me*  
Neha Rawat (Age 22, India)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Lesson of treating and behaving*  
Lê Hoàng Mai (Age 13, Vietnam)
- *Two Presents I Want You to Have*  
Chiaki Oyadomari (Age 14, Japan)

#### Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Knowledge and the Real Thing*  
Itsuki Umino (Age 16, Japan)
- *Study the Core*  
Anna Grigoryan (Age 20, Armenia)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (5 entrants)

- Aazeen Waqas (Age 9, Pakistan)
- Saki Ishikawa (Age 11, Japan)
- Jessica Arlund (Age 12, New Zealand)
- Anushka Bansal (Age 14, India)
- Umurbek Tsogzolmaa (Age 14, Mongolia)

#### Youth category (5 entrants)

- Chika Kiyasu (Age 16, Japan)
- Md. Noel Zaman (Age 17, Bangladesh <Living in Japan>)
- Anandhapadmanabhan Vijayakumar (Age 20, India)
- Djaafar Chelihi (Age 21, Algeria)
- Tsewang Nuru Sherpa (Age 21, Nepal)

## Honorable Mention

### Children's category (25 entrants)

- Ismael Aguirre Botero (Age 8, Colombia)
- Juan Pablo Ramirez Arbelaez (Age 8, Colombia)
- Himari Oda (Age 9, Japan)
- Laia Fiorella Lemus Coto (Age 9, El Salvador)
- Ryota Ueki (Age 9, Japan)
- Ayaka Nekomura (Age 12, Japan)
- Hideyuki Moriwaki (Age 12, Japan)
- Yurika Takeuchi (Age 12, Japan)
- Daffa Rafid Yunanda (Age 13, Indonesia)
- Denis Logvinov (Age 13, Russia)
- Hazuki Hoshikawa (Age 13, Japan)
- Lea Casucci (Age 13, Italy)
- Mao Yamaoka (Age 13, Japan)
- Rintaro Yamazaki (Age 13, Japan)
- Young Min 'Kate' Lee (Age 13, Korea)
- Anamika Bhoyrul (Age 14, Mauritius)
- Chihiro Kamata (Age 14, Japan)
- Kalyani Jijith (Age 14, U.A.E.)
- Minori Yamaguchi (Age 14, Japan)
- Natalia Solange Montenegro Palma (Age 14, Ecuador)
- Patrick Jennings (Age 14, Japan & U.K.)
- Pomi Ikeda (Age 14, Japan)

### Youth category (25 entrants)

- Fuka Minagawa (Age 15, Japan)
- Yoshimi Kato (Age 15, Japan)
- Christel Jirah Codilla (Age 16, Philippines)
- Moise Gasana (Age 16, Rwanda)
- Toshitsugu Fujii (Age 16, Japan)
- Mika Awa (Age 17, Japan)
- Saleh Mushahid (Age 17, Bangladesh)
- Viviane Schottler (Age 17, Germany)
- Yvonne Fudge S. Santos (Age 17, Philippines)
- Dalila Limbett Reyes Pérez (Age 18, Mexico)
- Inna Bondarenko (Age 19, Russia)
- Abiodun Damola (Age 20, Nigeria)
- Huzaifa Siyal (Age 20, Pakistan)
- Vivek Kumar (Age 20, India)
- Yuki Ono (Age 20, Japan)
- Allison Campbell (Age 21, Jamaica)
- Irene Latras Cortés (Age 22, Spain)
- Paula Ortiz Saenz (Age 22, Colombia)
- Thinley Choden (Age 22, Bhutan)
- Boniface Kimwere (Age 23, Kenya)
- Karolina Natalia Oleskiewicz (Age 23, Poland)
- Lorena Gamarra de Sousa Otto (Age 23, Peru)

- Saddat Nazir (Age 14, U.S.A.)
- Saki Nitta (Age 14, Japan)
- Yuuka Kawakami (Age 14, Japan)
- Cristina Rosian (Age 24, Romania)
- Rabia Rashid (Age 24, Pakistan)
- Scott Haber (Age 25, U.S.A.)

## Best School Award

No School Applicable

## School Incentive Award (40 schools)

Assumption Kokusai, Osaka (Japan)	Cevre College, Istanbul (Turkey)
Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday School, Illinois (USA)	Chikushi Jogakuen Junior High School, Fukuoka (Japan)
Escuela Preparatoria No. 8, Universidad de Guadalajara (México)	Escuela Preparatoria 15, Universidad de Guadalajara (México)
Fukushima Prefectural Asakakaisei Senior High School (Japan)	Gymnasium #1, Brest (Belarus)
Gymnasium 12, Minsk (Belarus)	Hiroshima Nagisa Junior High School, Senior High School (Japan)
Ibaraki Prefectural Koga Secondary School (Japan)	Inagi City Inagi The Fourth Junior High School (Japan)
Institucion Educativa Antonio José de Sucre, Itagui (Colombia)	Japanese Supplementary School in Middle Tennessee (USA)
Japaniche Schule in Zurich (Hoshuko) (Switzerland)	Johor Bahru Religious National Secondary School (Malaysia)
Kanagawa Prefectural Yokosuka High School (Japan)	Kinki University Wakayama Junior High School (Japan)
Kokugojuku KURU, Tokyo (Japan)	Kokushikan Junior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
Kyoto Gakuen Junior and Senior Highschool (Japan)	Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)
Meijo University Senior High School, Aichi (Japan)	Notre Dame Seishin Gakuen Seishin Junior High School / Seishin Girls' High School, Okayama (Japan)

Okinawa Prefectural Nago High School (Japan)	Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
Otsuma Ranzan Junior and Senior High School, Saitama (Japan)	Paderewski Private Grammar School, Lublin (Poland)
Preparatoria 23, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (México)	Rikkyo School in England, West Sussex (UK)
Sanonihondaigaku Secondary School, Tochigi (Japan)	Satri Withaya School, Bangkok (Thailand)
Showa Women's University Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)	Sjkc Kong Min Cawangan Kedua, Penang (Malaysia)
SMK Sri Nipah, Johor (Malaysia)	Teikyo Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School (Japan)	Tshaphel Lower Secondary School, Haa (Bhutan)
Ueno Elementary School of Toyonaka City (Japan)	Waseda Shibuya Senior High School (Singapore)

### **International Essay Contest for Young People**

#### Panel of Judges:

Chairman	Genshitsu Sen	Former Grand Tea Master of Urasenke, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador
	Koïchiro Matsuura	Former Director-General of UNESCO
	Suzue Miuchi	Cartoonist
	Masami Saionji	Chairperson, The Goi Peace Foundation
	Akira Suzuki	Language educator
	Shunichi Tokura	Composer
	Kazuhiko Yazaki	President & CEO, FELISSIMO CORPORATION
	Shomei Yoh	Picture book author

Organized by: The Goi Peace Foundation

Endorsed by: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of  
Japan, Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, Japan Private  
High School Federation, Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education,  
Japanese Broadcasting Corporation, Nikkei Inc.

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## Learning from Nature

(Original)

*Neda Simic*

*(Age 12, Bosnia and Herzegovina)*

*Elementary School „Sveti Sava“, Modrica*

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.

- Lao Tzu

In schools we study about nature like it is something separate from us. That is not true because we are part of nature. People try to use nature for their own needs. They act like they are masters and nature is their slave. They just take and take from nature and nothing giving back. That is a shame because nature can serve as a wonderful classroom.



From the moment we open our eyes for the first time we are learning constantly. Nature can be our greatest teacher. We don't spend as much time outdoors as previous generations did. Nature can teach us about life, how to live easier, healthier and meaningful life. Like a caterpillar transforms to a butterfly, people go through similar changes. That process is something we all go through, we can't avoid that. We can just learn something from it. As caterpillar becomes beautiful butterfly, people through learning, upgrading and grooming their personality become better human beings.

The biggest problem in today's society is loneliness. People are too obsessed with modern technologies. We live in virtual world and not living real lives. We all lost touch with people. There are no real friends. We would rather be on our phones than living our lives. The thing that we should do is to unite and make the world better.

We can't achieve anything if we are alone. One drop of water doesn't mean anything, but little drops make the mighty ocean. That means that we as individuals can't make big change, but when we are together we can change the world.

Our generations are selfish. We care just for ourselves and our lives. We often forget that we are all humans sharing similar worries and problems and leaning on other people and believing in their kindness can make our lives easier. We should look up to wolves. Wolves live in packs. They are caring, playful and above all devoted to their families. We often hear the phrase „lone wolf“. A lone wolf is someone who is individualist, independent and uncompromising. In reality few wolves live like this. Wolves, males and females, go through periods alone but they always come back to something greater than itself: a pack. Wolves hunt together, take care for each other. If they are injured they don't leave each other. Their friendships last whole life. If they cooperate they succeed, if they are alone they suffer. On the other hand, people are not like that. We can learn a lot of from wolves.

All people go through turbulent periods in their lives. In that periods people react differently. Some of them try to find solutions for their problems and some of them are not brave enough. They go through phases of depression, sadness and they do some things they regret later. Our lives aren't just about sunshine and rainbows so the nature isn't like that also. Sometimes beautiful weather turns into the horrible storm. But in nature animals do not panic. They find shelter and wait. They know storm will end and they will be safe.

Do you know a story about two boxes? On death bed a father gave his only son two boxes. One was black and the other was white. He said to open a white one when he has a difficult time in his life and the black one in the moments of the greatest happiness. During the floods when he lost all, he opened the white box where was written „This will pass“. Later in life when he had everything he opened the black and it was written „And this will pass also“. Nothing lasts forever. One Latin proverb also says „Panta rei“. Just look nature. There is nothing constant, everything changes. Seasons change, day and night, climate change. People should not be desperate in hard situations, but be aware that everything will pass.

Just stop for a minute and forget about your busy life. You need time just for yourself. Open the door, go outside and see what you can learn from nature.

## The Mulberry and Me

(Original)

*Neha Rawat*

*(Age 22, India)*

Have you ever felt like you have hit the rock bottom? Like there's no hope for survival? I did. I think everyone goes through that phase, when life seems to be going through hell, when it feels like your world has been burnt down to ashes and NO! In reality the phoenix just doesn't rise back from the ashes.

In medical terms a sustained feeling of this kind is referred to as depression.

I have had a phase of depression. Every little thing seemed to be beyond my control. Exams, family and friends, every issue related to each one of them supposedly enhanced its might to be too big to be handled by me and eventually I found myself spending my days staying gloomy and doing nothing. Life seemed meaningless and as negative as possible. My favorite hobbies suddenly lost all their charm. I used to stare at the blank ceiling most of the times.

Life would have been similar if I had not drifted my sight from the ceiling to the skylight of my room. I could see a tree there. No leaves. No signs of life at all. Just like me. I found some peace in knowing that I have a companion in this "being lifeless" game. It was a Mulberry tree. I called it The Mulberry.

I had a new thing to do now, stare at The Mulberry and ponder why is it not dead yet? Why had my mom not cut it yet? Why was it still there if there is no life in it? I thought it'll fell someday by itself and then I'll lose my new friend. Days turned into weeks and weeks into months. One day I noticed lots of green bumps on it, sprouting little leaves and mulberries. I wondered how it could bear fruits all



over it, right after coming from the dead. In the upcoming days I saw the lifeless tree turning into the most beautiful thing ever. It was all green and laden with sweet fruits. There were bees and birds and squirrels and so many other creatures on it.

I still don't know what the right word for that feeling is. That day The Mulberry taught me how the life rises from the dead. The Mulberry was my phoenix. Even when it appeared dead it was a cradle of life all the time. It was just a matter of seasons. Sometimes life has to get on the back seat but that doesn't mean it's not there. My perspective changed all together, if a plant can come back to life what's stopping me then? Life has been happier and I have been stronger since then. As I write this, The Mulberry is still there out of my window, maybe checking on me.

As I paid some attention I realized that all that nature knows is to live like there's no tomorrow. No matter what, the plants and the animals, even the littlest of them all, just don't know how to give up on life.

As I learnt about depression I was startled to know that there are so many people going through it. As I write this, lot of people would have taken their lives because they couldn't hold onto hope till the change of seasons. By 2050 it's supposed to be the largest cause of deaths across the world. Yes, it'll surpass the big bad Cancer and the mighty AIDS. I wish The Mulberry could talk and I could let everyone hear its story of rising back from the dead. Life can never be bad enough to be worth taking our lives. A tree or a puppy can help us learn how good the life is if we let it, as The Mulberry taught me.

Now I work to help those fighting with depression. Nothing can match the joy of seeing someone learning to laugh again. Yes! Phoenix does rise back.

I believe that we have to choose our battles. This is mine. Helping others fight Depression. If I could make even a single person see the life in the dead tree, it'll all be worth it.



## **Lesson of treating and behaving**

(Original)

*Lê Hoàng Mai*

*(Age 13, Vietnam)*

“There has been another flood in Central provinces recently. Two people have been killed and several more are still missing after torrential rain flooding in central Vietnam...” – the reporter’s voice was lifted up. This has been the second time in the past two weeks that central provinces in Vietnam has been hit by flooding. Flooding happens every year, every time, so frequent that people in central Vietnam have been accustomed themselves to floods. I was standing still, starring at the TV screen and wondered: “After such things, do people finally understand the lesson which we are being taught, or what is nature trying to teach us?” Most people do not. But if we look more carefully and think deeper, we can find out that lesson with no difficulty.

It’s the lesson of treating and behaving. It’s the lesson of treating other how you want to be wanted.

In modern civilization, people is used to exploiting nature’s resources in order to make big progress, to make money and to survive. But people are so greedy as they are becoming crueller to the nature. They are cutting down trees illegally as well as hunting wildlife. Last year in Vietnam, there was a water pollution crisis affecting four provinces in central Vietnam, including Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue. And the cause of the serious pollution was the Taiwanese corporation Formosa Plastics. The company had been discharging toxic industrial waste illegally into the ocean through drainage pipes in order the clean them which led to a lot of dead fish. They do not hesitate to do these things because the excitement of making money is much bigger than the fear of exhausting the Earth’s resources. But you reap what you sow.

For example, cutting down trees leads to floods, landslides and more disasters which cause damage to people lives and substances. A large number of dead fish were found on the coast of those provinces. According to Reuters news, it takes Vietnam approximately a decade to recover after the worst pollution has never happened before.

We human beings are attending a class. It is the class where nature is the teacher and we are the students. The students are supposed to listen to the teacher. And the teacher is supposed to teach and fix the students' mistakes. But we are always making the same mistakes. Why? Because we never listen to the teacher. Each time we make that mistake, we blame for the cruel of the nature while we are supposed to blame ourselves first. But nobody seems to understand that. Until one day, we will regret for what we have done so far.

Yes, the mistake which we make is killing the nature for profit only. Every time it warns us or teaches us, each time there is a disaster.

The nature is teaching us. It teaches us to be tolerant towards nature so that the world will be full of peace and happiness, otherwise we will be treated the way we treat the nature – cruel and brutal.

Nature is precious. It is a perfect and magical creature. It is a silent teacher. Every day, we can learn many things from the nature. It contains love and inspiration. Human just need to put down their phones, go outside for a walk, close their eyes and feel the beauty of nature out there. We will find the nature much more lively than what we expected. Just try to hear the whisper of nature one time, then you may know there are so much things to explore and learn from it.

Be open-minded, be persistent and keep learning from the nature. Help others know that, too. Let people know that nature matters because it does.

## **Two Presents I Want You to Have**

(Original in Japanese)

*Chiaki Oyadomari*

*(Age 14, Japan)*

*Taira Junior High School of Miyakojima City, Okinawa*

Human beings can receive vitality and wisdom from nature.

In our daily lives, we might feel happy and break out into dance, or we might experience something so painful that we don't know why we are living. We cannot guess what will happen from one moment to the next. When we are having a particularly difficult time, how can we become more optimistic? When I am thinking pessimistically, I try to get out into nature. Just by leaving the house and taking a walk in a nearby wood or on the beach—feeling the sand on my bare feet, not thinking about anything—before I know it, I realize that my heart feels lighter. Having done this many times, I have come to love nature.

Because I believe that we human beings can get vitality from nature, it occurred to me that getting in touch with nature might be a way to help people who are considering suicide. They say that in Japan, more than 20,000 people commit suicide every year. I cannot imagine how troubled a person must be to make the decision to end their life. And yet, every life is precious. In order to save some of these precious lives, I want to raise my voice and tell people how effective the power of nature is.

On the weekends, I sometimes go bird watching. From spring to early summer, you can often see birds building their nests. One day I managed to spot the nest of a Japanese white-eye. I was sure I had seen an egg in it, but when I looked the next day, the nest was empty. Then, I saw a broken egg that had tragically fallen from the nest, and I felt such pity. An enemy such as a crow or weasel must have attacked the nest. The mother and father birds were still near the nest, looking

much sadder than I was.

But to my surprise, a few weeks later, the adult birds had made a new nest, and were preparing to lay new eggs in it. They were looking ahead, and were determined to do what they wanted to do. I was moved by this sight, and at the same time, I felt that I should try not to get discouraged when something bad happens, but to keep moving forward. I'm sure all people would be encouraged by seeing animals behave in this way. If someone has lost their spirit, I would tell them to spend some time in a nearby wood, by a river, or at the ocean. I think that if this idea spread throughout Japanese society, fewer and fewer people would put an end to their own irreplaceable life.

I have learned many things from nature, and as I have grown, I have started wishing that I could tell many people how wonderful nature is. Then, I had the idea that I could show people the attractions of the Ono forest on Miyakojima, which I regularly visit. I made a plan to start my own eco-tour, with the theme of 'introducing the creatures of the forest.' I first tried it with some friends of mine whom I always go walking with.

Since I had never heard of a junior high school student being a tour guide before, I didn't think many people would come for my tour. But actually, a lot of people signed up. I felt so happy, and I worked very hard on preparing explanations that even small children could understand. What do I want to tell people about the animals? As I asked myself this question, the answer came to me: wisdom.

Since last year, I have been investigating the lifestyle of the peacocks and peahens in the Ono forest. Although I often see the adult birds, no matter how many times I search the forest, I have not been able to find a nest or eggs. When I asked someone in a hunting club about it, I learned that peafowl breed on coastal cliffs that people cannot reach. Maybe because they fear destruction by humans, they purposely build their nests along the coast. I think this is an example of wisdom for survival.

Tree frogs lay their eggs in the tops of trees near water. The adult frogs purposely find trees at least two meters tall and climb them to lay their eggs. My younger brother learned the reason why when some tree frog eggs fell from a tree into the pond where he was playing. The ball of white, glutinous eggs, about the

size of a fist, attracted turtles, who started eating the eggs. In other words, the frogs lay their eggs up in the trees so that they are not eaten before they hatch. I was very impressed by this. Whenever I encounter animals doing things like this, I want to tell them how amazing they are.

From nature, people can learn the wisdom to live with strength. I would like to tell many people about nature's gifts of vitality and wisdom, because I want to see their smiling faces!

## Knowledge and the Real Thing

(Original in Japanese)

*Itsuki Umino*

*(Age 16, Japan)*

*Otsuma Nakano Senior High School, Tokyo*

For me, surrounded by buildings since I can remember, nature has always been a mysterious existence, nearby and yet far distant.

Many times in our ethics classes, we learned about nature and wrote about nature based on our knowledge—how wonderful nature is, and how human beings have a deep connection with it. Of course, I had never once experienced nature for myself, but I wrote about it superficially based on what we had learned, and I was happy to get passing marks. Before I knew it, ‘knowledge-based nature’ had gone beyond the framework of knowledge and become established in my mind as ‘real nature.’

A turning point came for me when I was 15, during the summer after my first year in high school, when I did a short study program in Australia. I didn’t have a particularly strong interest in studying abroad. When I started high school, everyone was talking about their dreams and setting their future course. I was still uncertain about my future, and spurred on by restlessness, I casually applied for the program, with the idea that I should start by broadening my horizons.

With an indescribable feeling of anticipation mixed with anxiety, I left for Australia. From the airport, I took a bus to the school, and when the bus stopped, the teacher in charge said to us, “This is the school where all of you will be spending the next two weeks.” As I got off the bus and looked around, I couldn’t believe my eyes. A boundless field of grass stretched out right in front of me, and windmills stood in a row. *Is this really a high school?* I thought, at a loss for words as I looked at the natural scenery that stretched out with no end in sight. The

inexpressible magnificence of the nature here made me keenly aware of how different it was from the feeble 'knowledge-based nature' I had learned. And for the first time in 15 years, I felt in my heart how amazing nature really is.

My stay in Australia began with this shock of encountering the real nature—like a kind of baptism—and continued with a series of new discoveries.

In Tokyo, I spent my time on social media, watching videos, and going to trendy shops with friends on our days off. But in Australia, I didn't once use social media or watch single video. I was doing a homestay, and every morning when I got up, I would go for a walk near the house with the children of the homestay family. After school, I would play in a nearby river, and when it got dark I would return home by starlight. On my days off I went hiking in the nearby hills to a waterfall, and I rode a boat to an island a little ways away, where I swam in the ocean.

I wondered if the time that I idled away in Tokyo could be made this brilliant and wonderful just by mixing in some time in nature. I thought very hard about this.

Compared to the light that seeps out from buildings, the countless stars in the night sky shine much more brightly. Compared to the draft from an air conditioner, the breeze coming off a river is much cooler. Riding on a boat to an obscure island is much more fun than taking a train to a shop that's trending on social media. And a face creased up with laughter after getting covered in sand is much more radiant than a face decorated with make-up. And more beautiful. I believe nature and human beings are meant to live together.

Many people outside Japan have the impression that Japanese people are very punctual. This is a good thing, and an important thing. But through my contact with nature, I realized something else: Japanese people are controlled by time. It is no exaggeration to say that nowadays in Japan, people spend every day worried about time and dominated by time. Many people believe that we have to live our lives by the clock. Actually, for 15 years, I believed that, too. But I learned that it shouldn't be that way.

We human beings should learn about time through real experience with nature, and from tomorrow on, let that understanding guide our lives. It is not our moral understanding of nature, but our real experience with nature that teaches us how time is originally meant to flow. When we learn about time from the great existence

called nature, the world broadens, and our options broaden, too. I think this understanding is indispensable to Japan's development from here on.



## **Study the Core**

(Original)

*Anna Grigoryan*  
(Age 20, Armenia)

I've left my stone walls and chose the walls of green. One, two, three, and the cold wind breaks those walls and takes me and also you, my reader, to an amazing journey. We see the birds high in the sky; we feel the power coming out of their wings. They are swimming in the endless blue of the sky and diving inside the soft clouds. But suddenly we hear a terrifying noise. "Look back! The huge screaming iron bird is so close." White smoke marks the bird's way, and heavy wings disturb the calmness of the sky. We get hit by it and lose the sky and our birds. With an enormous speed we fall into the hug of the ocean. It's deep, it's wise, and it accepts our broken wings: ocean takes the feather and gives us flippers. Again we are healed by nature, and we are free. Like a child that has just learnt to walk, with a boundless curiosity we dive into the depth of the saver. Fish of all colors surround us like watercolor drops. We go deeper into the darkness where, instead of fish and corals, trash and other toxins welcome us. Then ... A crucial force enables our free bodies with a large net and we cannot fight back. The diver's trap takes us to the boat. One, two, three: "Do you feel the cold breathing of death on you face?" It's time to come back. In our way, we see destroyed forests with their sad remainders; we go through the toxic smog of the factories and plunge into the rotten mountain-like piles of garbage.

Yes, we have learnt a lot from nature. We have learnt how to fly like a bird and dive like a fish; use the heat of the sun and power of the wind; get medicine from plants and trees and heat from natural oils. But the more we learnt from nature, the more we destructed it, and further we pushed ourselves from nature. Before acquiring and imitating physical magic of nature, people should have learnt its basic principles of

existence.

Take my hand; we are going to our next journey. You have transformed into a small, helpless drop of water. Your father is the cloud, and mother is the sun. And now, with all your brothers and sisters you are raining on the Earth. Boom!!! And you fall on a beautiful leaf. You have to wait until the leaf gives you the needed angle to fall. Patience... Human beings need to learn to be patient. The lesson of patience will build the base of peace: no hate, no aggression and of course, no bloody wars. After waiting enough you fall from the green leaf into the running river. Millions of other drops, just like you, are in that river. First, you get surprised, and then you smile. From nature we need to learn and fully understand that we all are a small, unnoticeable part of something bigger. But without those small parts, the big will not exist at all. For us, it is very hard to think that Earth does not spin around us. But only after learning this significant lesson, we will find harmony within ourselves and come to our roots: to Mother Nature. You finally, find your place as a drop. But your life again is going to be changed by one warm ray that will take you out of the river and throw back to the sky. "I am dead," you'll think. But exactly at that point, the endless cycle of you being a rain drop will begin.

For us, there is no end. We know that there is a timeless circle of life in nature. Trees, animals, water, everything is timeless in nature. And the most important thing that the human being should learn is that we are nature. Like a drop, we are endless and timeless. We are always alive and part of something more important and perfect than just a simple human life. After this lesson, everything becomes simple and clear.

## **Learning from Nature**

(Original)

*Aazeen Waqas*  
(Age 9, Pakistan)

Nature is really diverse and every aspect of it has great learning opportunities for all the creatures living in it. We all are connected to the nature in one way or another and we all get inspiration from nature. Everything in the nature has a reason for its existence. Nature makes our lives easier by providing all the required resources for our daily living from food to shelter, clothing, recreation and nurture us like a mother. Nature has a balance in everything. Nature has hidden meanings and its right interpretation can lead to many life lessons and discoveries. All the developments we see today are a result of careful observations and learning from the nature.

Everything in the nature has its own life cycle and the end of one life cycle of an organism can be the start of life of another organism's lifecycle. This shows that nature recycles in many ways and nothing is useless or a waste in nature. For example, microorganisms are really tiny have helped the environment in sustaining life and maintaining the life cycle of the plants by decomposing dead and waste matter. These plants then provide food and resources to human beings and other living creatures dependent on it.

Nature teaches us hardwork, harmony and discipline. A simple example is of a small insect Ant which always moves in a group in a disciplined manner. They carry the food which is much bigger than their size and apparently seems impossible to handle by a small creature. We can even learn from minute organisms. Animals from the same species tend to help each other so that they can work quicker and

more efficiently. We humans can learn these skills from animals. If humans also used this , they would become quicker and will work more efficiently as they would be organized and would cooperate with each other.

If we observe animals, they teach us survival skills and how we should not let fear dominate our lives. These survival skills are used by all predators and prey. One of these skills is camouflage with which prey hide from the clutches of the predators and predators try to sneak up behind their prey. An example of this being used by humans is the people in the army camouflage during the wars to sneak up on their enemy and their base and move ahead fearlessly.

A seedling growing from the seed and turning into a new fresh plant teaches us of hope. If humans plant seeds of hope and nourish them with love, care and attention with the faith that their labor will not be wasted and will result in fruits in future.

Flock of birds fly in harmony and never run into each other. They understand their body language. Humans can learn that communication is not just through words, body language and emotions can be sensed and we all should be supporting to each other to make this world a better place.

Trees and small plants grow in the garden giving each other a space to grow. Creepers and vines get support for their growth from the trees , trees provide food and shelter to other living things. We as humans can learn to be supportive to each other to help others to grow and sustain. If we humans learn from nature, we can make this world a better place to live.

**If We Are Kind**  
(Original in Japanese)

*Saki Ishikawa*

*(Age 11, Japan)*

*Kansai Soka Elementary School, Osaka*

I think of nature as having human feelings. If we treat nature kindly and with care, it will give us clear skies and clean air. If we mistreat nature, it will get angry, and thunder and lightning will descend on us. If nature is sad, acid rain will come falling down.

When I was little I used to go to a park near my grandma's house. While my grandma and I walked through the tunnel of trees and bushes, I thought, *Why do the trees seem so friendly?*

Whenever I look at a tree, I want to capture it in a drawing or a photo. And when I do, I feel that my own heart has become kinder, too. Every tree seems friendly to me—not only the trees at the park I went to with my grandma, but also the trees in front of the train station, the cherry blossom trees at school, and so on. I think this is because trees are part of nature. Since I am kind and caring to nature, I think nature is kind to me.

However, I saw on TV that representatives from around the world were meeting to discuss the destruction of nature caused by global warming and other problems. I studied global warming in grade 5, and I was frightened to learn that if global warming progresses, nature will disappear, and human beings and other creatures will be unable to live on earth.

If nature has human feelings, right now I think it is angry and sad. I think people should be kinder to nature.

So, in what ways can we be kinder? I thought and thought about this.

First of all, I think it's important to know how beautiful nature is. When people think, *I love nature!* they will probably be more considerate towards nature. Then, they will put that kindness into practice. They will start thinking, *I'm doing this for beautiful Mother Nature*, and that mindset will continue for a long time. I think everyone will understand what they ought to do, and how to do it. They will come up with new ideas and solutions. One example is the lottery. The lottery company could use five percent of its profits to plant trees, or contribute to lectures that let people know how beautiful nature is and that we should care for nature.

I think school is important, too—learning about nature at school. In addition, it would also be good to have group discussions about global warming. Today's elementary school, middle school, and high school students will all be adults in 20 years. If they are kind and caring to nature at that time, then nature will be protected. On the other hand, if we do not learn about nature, then the earth could end up ruined and uninhabitable. Therefore, we should be made to think about nature and the environment at school.

I also think about how we will sustain nature in the future. Perhaps we will make nature artificially, through scientific development. In that case, would it really be nature? To preserve nature as it is today, we ought to be kind to it.

Why should we be kind to nature? Because if we are kind to nature, nature will share its resources and allow us to appreciate its beauty.

I hope the gentle trees at the park that I went to with my grandma will always be there. For that, I would like to do what I can.

## **Purpose**

(Original)

*Jessica Arlund*

*(Age 12, New Zealand)*

In the enormous world we live in today, it's easy to forget that we matter. That, in amongst the crowd, we too have a voice. Sometimes, we feel like we're just another face, blending seamlessly into the world, our existence unnecessary. Sometimes we feel like we aren't needed at all. But that's not how it has to be.

Think about it; If just one chemical in your body was non-existent, you would be completely different. They form and fight for who you are and who you are to become. If just one lion in the pride didn't hunt, they'd let the whole pack down. Just one. Everything in nature has a purpose, every animal, plant, cell and atom. They all have a reason to be there, something to accomplish, something to contribute too. No matter how small, it would still change everything if it wasn't there. As human beings, we do too. We're part of nature and we're responsible for this world and what we've made of it. We all have a purpose, a story and we can *all* make an impact. Everything counts.

Have you ever heard the expression: just a drop in the ocean? As in: it won't change anything, it's just another drop in ocean? In 2016 alone, 663 million people didn't have access to clean water, something we take for granted. That's 1 in 10 people walking this earth. What is as easy as a turn of a tap for us could be an hour's walk for others. But what could we do to help, I mean, we're just one person, it would be no more than another drop in the ocean, wouldn't it? Well maybe that's just from our perspective. Because if you gave that drop to a person deprived of water, it would make all the difference.

Too many people aren't standing up for things they believe in because of fear that it won't make any difference. But, if one act of kindness represents one drop of

water, then imagine how far that drop travels around the world. It might be the water that someone swims through on vacation, the water that saves the life of a dehydrated child and the water that rains on a country after a year-long drought. And suddenly, that one act of kindness grows and spreads all over the globe, even if that wasn't what it was intended to do.

We're all connected, a bit like the hive of a honeybee. Each bee has a job that must be done. They work together as a team and as a result their pollen keeps plants alive all over the world. Like honey bees our path in life doesn't have to be lead individually, in fact it can be improved by the people around us. It's the same in many elements of the natural world. As each animal does it's own job, everything works in harmony. Unlike many humans, they simply focus on the work they must complete. I believe we should be inspired by this to lead our own lives and write our own stories rather than envying other people's advantages. We should focus on our own purpose.

So, if we're here for a reason, what is it? We can guess and predict, but truth is, no one really knows. And maybe we'll never find out. But that shouldn't stop us from searching for a goal to accomplish or a deed to complete. Our world is filled with problems created by us and those who came before us. If one thing's obvious, it's that our purpose is not to be part of the problem, neither is it to blend in. So we need to live our lives to the fullest, embrace our talents, help one another and find our reason to be alive!

Everything in nature has a purpose, from the plants that we eat to the birds that soar above us. As humans, we too have a purpose. But we won't find it if we never look or try new things. So what are we waiting for? Work together, make an impact, you do matter, you are part of this world for a reason, you have a purpose.



## **Nature: Depths in the hills**

(Original)

*Anushka Bansal*

*(Age 14, India)*

*Venkateshwar International School, New Delhi*

All of the mankind yearns for contentment, but what is this yearning all about? I asked myself one day as I sat beside the windowsill in my room.

*Dear Diary,*

*I am going through the daily stresses of being a teenager. My life mundane as a wet weekend in Wigan. Frustrated as I could be, I return from school under the burning sun when something unexpected happens. I breathe a sigh as my mother tells me to pack up for the hills. "We're leaving in two hours", she says, my smile widens to a curve.*

*I live in India- a country known for its proximity to nature. Ironic as that may sound, I hardly ever witness the true beauty of nature in my hometown. Carbon emissions from vehicles and acidic rain pouring down haunt the survival of plants. That surely isn't the situation one would want to seek solace in, is it? We drive for nine hours straight from the bustling city of Delhi to the serene town of Lansdowne in the north of Uttarakhand.*

*Viridity fills my lungs as the hill station draws closer. Two well-dressed attendants await our arrival and greet us with a smile. We are welcomed with the traditional delicacies of the state. All of my anger fades away before pleasantness takes over and just as so, I blurt out a clumsy "thank you" to the people. We settle*

*in.*

*A fresh wind breeze greets me; I wave my hand to nothingness in the air, just an artistic movement, and a gentle caress back to the wind and back to nature.*

Back to nature...

*I lie down on the fresh grass and stare at the sky. As a bee hums, I do the same. The atmosphere reverberates in the happiness, true contentment.*

*An answer to a question that was so long lost to me. This is my eureka moment, not in the bathtub but under the sky. Epiphany... I am exhilarated.*

We often misinterpret contentment for comfort. True happiness is found in nature as it holds the power to connect with the inner self of a person. Nature is wholeness. Be it the childish joy of me spotting the Ursa Major in the night sky or the maturity of the seed compared to a new born child. We, as a society of beings, take our greatest teacher for granted. Science has brought to us the most comfortable of chairs and the most convenient of methods. All for what? An even more hassled brain? For the majesty of the human brain turning into an automated machine?

Nature has empowered us more significantly than the deadly ammunitions of warfare. An apple fell down a tree and laws of gravitation were discovered. Nature teaches us to take pride and look for happiness in the smallest of things: Morning Dew, blooming flowers or the clouds in the sky. What is important is not the momentary pleasures but satisfaction from within. A jewel of thought coined by Albert Einstein rightly fits in "Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better." An encounter with nature can change perspectives and compel beings into respecting other beings. Nature teaches mankind how simplicity and generosity lead to success. Nature is abundant and interdependent, so should be the man. In the midst of nature, one can find grace, stillness, respect,

interdependence, joy, and balance. All that is required of the leaders of today. For guaranteed success in future, the present must be taken into account. Inner satisfaction is a catalyst for future success and this inner satisfaction is found in depths of nature.

*An experience with nature taught me what this yearning is all about as I sat on the windowsill, staring at the birds in the sky; Reflecting on the days ahead of me.*

## **The Blueness of the Sky, the Importance of Life**

(Original in Japanese)

*Umurbek Tsogzolmaa*

*(Age 14, Mongolia)*

*Shine Mongol High School, Ulaanbaatar*

In the past, our ancestors risked their lives hunting mammoths, and put great time and effort into cultivating rice. What about today? Many of us eat instant miso soup, or make do with fast food. The bonito flakes that are used to make the broth for miso soup came from the ocean, and the green onions in the soup were grown in a field somewhere. The ground beef for hamburgers and the chicken in chicken nuggets come from animals that are also part of nature. In other words, our lives are made up of the blessings of nature and the sacrifices of other animals.

However, I don't think this is a bad thing. Our bodies constantly need fats and amino acids, which are necessary for us to go on living. But recently, I think we may have lost sight of something.

Our nomadic ancestors respected nature and placed great value on the lives of animals. It is quite contradictory to the commonly held image of them, as savage peoples who ate nothing but meat, but that image is wrong. These people raised sheep and cattle, and moved them from place to place. In the cold, dry, barren lands, they couldn't grow vegetables, so their meals consisted of meat and dairy products. However, they ate meat mainly in the wintertime, when more energy was required to survive, and the rest of the year they ate mainly dairy products. In winter, they didn't slaughter the plumpest sheep, but rather the old and weak ones that they thought would not be able to survive the winter.

First, they would lay the sheep on its back and use a knife to sever a blood vessel near its heart. That way, it wouldn't be in pain, and not a drop of blood would spill on the ground. They believed it was a curse to spill blood on the ground. The sheep's meat, blood, bones, and wool were all put to use; nothing was thrown away. This was the people's way of showing gratitude to the animal.

I lived in Japan for eight years, and last year I returned to Mongolia. I went to a rural area, and I hesitated to eat the food served there. The mutton had a peculiar odor, and in addition to the usual cuts of meat there was also ear and tongue. I couldn't help feeling disgusted, but then I came to realize something. At a distance from our yurt, I saw a truck bed with a sheep on it. The sheep was not trying to escape—it stayed very still. At first, I didn't pay much attention to it, but when I went outside in the evening I noticed that the sheep was gone. When I asked my father about it, he said that the sheep had been brought to this area as food for the people staying in the vacation homes here.

That night, we bought meat for our dinner, but when I thought about how it was the meat of that sheep, I couldn't eat it. However, my mother said, "If you really feel sorry for the sheep, then you should eat the meat. If you don't eat it, it will go to waste, but if you eat it, the sheep will live on inside you." I thought then that 'life' is not just a word, but is something very important.

Afterwards, I looked out at the grass-covered plain, the mountains stretching on and on, the endless blue sky, the hawks and other birds flying around, and the river flowing ever onward, and my heart felt full. The greatness of nature overwhelmed me.

I learned from that experience that we human beings are in no way separate from other living things—we are part of nature, and all of us are equal. We often say that we are not animals, but actually, we are animals, too. We are not superior to other creatures, looking down on them—we are kept alive through the lives of other creatures, and we should be grateful.

However, in today's culture of convenience, how many people give heartfelt thanks before eating a chicken nugget or a box lunch from a convenience store? We might have cutting edge technology and live in skyscrapers, but if we don't breathe air and eat food, we will die. We are kept alive by the blessings of nature—plants, animals, and others.

That summer, I feel that I learned from nature about the importance of life, and I was humbled by how our lives are sustained by nature. I think that if we are aware of this, we will give more thought to how we live, and to protecting other living things. We will step outside of the narrow framework of technological development and really be able to see nature for what it is.

So to start, let's give heartfelt thanks for our food.

## **A Spirit of Coexistence**

(Original in Japanese)

*Chika Kiyasu*

*(Age 16, Japan)*

*Kanagawa Prefectural Yokosuka High School*

My grandparents have a cottage in the woods near the Yatsugatake Mountains. It's a cottage with 50 years of history. When I was younger, my family and I would spend time there in the summer.

I learned many things there. Because the cottage was in the woods, every year a huge number of leaves piled up on the roof and blocked the rain gutters. I loved climbing up on the roof. I would look at the sunlight softly filtering through the leaves and the view of the distant mountains, and feel the breeze on my skin. At night, I would gaze up at the sky, filled with stars as if a jewel box had been turned upside down. Then, in the spring, when I went up to clean out the dead leaves, the leaves would be packed down under the winter snow, like a hard lump of clay, and would not budge. The lumps of leaves stuck in the rain gutters were a nuisance for us, but this 'nuisance' was also useful to people living in the city, as compost for growing flowers and vegetables. I was reminded that everywhere in the forest, there are things that are formed naturally, and we human beings cut them up into small pieces, giving them a certain worth.

I learned other things, too. Each fall, we had great fun gathering chestnuts from the big chestnut tree next to the cottage. But usually, on the days when I went to the mountains, nature was not on my side. Insects would get to the chestnuts before me, and I would find little visitors inside small holes made on the surface. In elementary school, I read a haiku poem that goes: *Chestnut gathering / where an insect / got there first*. In those days, I felt that the insects and I were equals, and that I had just lost the contest to get the delicious chestnuts first. When I recited the poem to my

grandfather, he said, "Yes, the creatures of the forest were here first. We came later, and they allow us to live here." Therefore, he didn't mind when mice chewed holes in the mattresses, or moths came into the house. It's true—we came here after them. Rather than using insecticides, it's better if we can patiently coexist. I think my grandfather taught me that.

We tend to feel that we dominate nature with the power of science, but I think what's really important is the sense of humility I learned from my grandfather—that human beings came later and have been allowed to live in nature. I never want to lose the awareness that all living things sustain each other's lives.

These days, forests are disappearing from the world more and more each year. We human beings are creating a world of carbon dioxide, which we cannot breathe, and are breaking the life cycle that has been in place on earth for such a long time. In order to go on living on planet Earth, I think we have to always be aware that we came later and have been allowed to live here. We need to think all the time about finding a balance with our environment, and humbly coexisting with our surroundings. No matter how far science advances, we should always think of living in harmony with others. Between people and nature, among individuals and groups of people, and among countries, we need an attitude of coexistence. People living in different regions naturally have different cultures, and if we don't respect each other's cultures, I don't think there is any future for humanity. No culture can be superior to any other, so a spirit of open-mindedness, where we accept our differences, is needed to achieve world peace. I will never stop wishing for a world where all living things coexist in harmony.



## **Mother Nature**

(Original in Japanese)

*Md. Noel Zaman*

*(Age 17, Bangladesh <Living in Japan>)*

*University of Tsukuba Senior High School at Sakado, Saitama*

*The forest is indispensable to human beings, which is why deforestation is a serious problem.*

I have heard this kind of statement again and again. But why is the forest so important? Why is deforestation such a serious problem? Having little interest in nature or the environment, I didn't understand why it mattered so much.

However, participating in an international exchange in grade 11 changed my mind. The main theme of our exchange was the Indonesia 100 Year Forest Project. With our sister school in Indonesia, we were divided into teams, each focusing on a different area—environmental education, community development, ecotourism, and so on. During our week together, we considered, from these various points of view, how we could preserve Indonesia's forests for the next 100 years, and we started putting our ideas into action.

I was in the Community Development group, and we were working with a local women's group called PKK, thinking about how they could sell more of the soap that they made from local tea and lemongrass. There were two main reasons why we undertook this activity. Firstly, it was believed that the soap-making business gave employment to women and helped to revitalize the village, so that promoting the activities of the women's group was connected to the development of the village. It was also thought that promoting the women's activities would indirectly help to protect the forests, because the women's group played a role in forest preservation.

During the exchange, I realized that the majority of people in the village I visited earned their income from the forest or from nature. They grew crops, or they sold

products made with things they harvested from the forest. What I realized was that people's livelihoods are closely connected with the forest. Until then, I had thought that the only role of the forest was to absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen. In both advanced and developing countries, people living in cities tend to think this way. But they don't realize that in everyday life, they are receiving the blessings of the forest.

A well-known example is the way people living in cities will visit a place full of nature when they need to release some stress or take a mental break. Thinking back on my own past, I newly realized this. For a long time, I have unconsciously loved nature. In nature, I was able to calm down and forget my troubles. For this reason, I often visited a nature park in my neighborhood. At what point, I wondered, did I start to make light of the blessings of nature?

Perhaps it is similar to what happens as we grow up. We forget to be thankful to our mother who gave birth to us, and as we get older, we become colder toward our mother. It is the same, I feel, with our relationship to nature and the forest. Although we are constantly receiving nature's blessings in our daily life, we lose sight of this.

Nature is humanity's mother. That is why all of us are able to relax when we visit someplace where nature is abundant.

Today, the main source of people's livelihoods has shifted from agriculture to industry. People have moved from places rich in nature to go live in cities. We often neglect the blessings that we are receiving from nature. However, I think we need to learn that our lives are sustained by nature, and that without nature, we could not live from day to day. It might seem like a very simple, obvious thing, but such simple, obvious things are the most important.

As stated above, nature is our mother. In order to preserve Mother Nature for future generations, I think we should do what we can, little by little, to protect nature, starting with the places closest to us. As an example, I am now studying the importance of 'ethical fashion,' or fashion that is environmentally conscious. Through this research, I hope to let many people know about the value and preciousness of nature.

I believe we can solve any environmental problem by loving Mother Nature. This is because when we love and care for nature, our way of thinking and acting changes.

## **Nature and Agriculture: The Idea of Life**

(Original)

*Anandhapadmanabhan Vijayakumar*

*(Age 20, India)*

The anthropological relationship with nature cannot be understood without delving deeper into the practices, ideas and perceptions behind agriculture which is not only necessary for our survival, but also one of the existential anthropological activity that relates closest to the natural world.

One of the most relevant advancement made in human history in the past century is the massive revolution in agricultural practices that we call green revolution, that has also been a catalyst for cementing the much needed food security for millions. However, what we fail to notice in this is the after effects of the green revolution as we know, due to the exclusion of sustainable ecological practices that once dominated cultivation. Modern agricultural practices has been rife with exclusion of fundamental ecological determinants by eliminating the once diverse and countless varieties of crops and seeds, each of which had evolved over time to suit itself to the local ecosystem and climate.

The focus of Indigenous agricultural practices once used to be in creating an Ecosystem being inclusive of the delicate food web, the soil, the bacteria, insects and countless life forms that had built the delicate biological balance in which life in all its diversity stood and evolved.

Traditional agricultural practices involved the assimilation of ecology with cultivation. A certain philosophy of life and symbiosis that nurtured your nutrition. Managing the ecosystem was of priority. Studies indicate how constant biological interaction of these crop varieties with a flourishing ecosystem helped these crop varieties naturally evolve over time to improve its nutrient content, pest resistance and medicinal qualities. Evolution of life does not happen in isolation, but through

constant biological interaction with your surroundings and your cognitive perceptions. Being one of the first steps of evolution, it is important to let the plants "perceive" a diverse and versatile reality so that they evolve to reflect the "collective quality" of the environment they grew in.

In essence, agriculture in itself has this philosophy of life of exposing the crop to the million manifestations of nature and allowing them to interact with the ecological reality that surrounds them. Allowing each generation of these crops to evolve. To provide them with a milieu just as humans would under a diverse society.

More than 40000 varieties of rice evolved through time, interacting with the ecology that traditional wisdom knew not to interrupt. No R&D, no laboratory experiments. Just letting them grow in a diverse ecology.

All manifestations of life accumulate certain Cognitive and perceptual knowledge in the course of their lifetime, gradually causing it to interpolate into their genetic makeup and evolve through generations. Be it a honey bee, a human or even a crop. The exclusion of bio pool around crops leave crops nothing to interact with, making it just a piece of life in the middle of nowhere with a stunted development of its cognitive biology. This will eventually result in the destruction of the ontological process resulting from being part of a diverse natural milieu.

I understand the challenges of poverty and global hunger. But a transcendental approach to agriculture will fail sooner or later, as several generations of crops pass, detached from an ecosystem and cut out from the process of evolution will eventually fall in ontological versatility. Philosophy of agriculture and Nature nourish the same philosophy of life. The principle is that impulses and evolution of life is mutually entangled. Actions of one form of life has a profound effect on itself and the world around it. It is therefore not conservation alone, but also evolution which should be envisaged in our understanding of nature.

## **Un Rendez-vous avec La Nature**

(Original)

*Djaafar Chelhi*

*(Age 21, Algeria)*

*Université Constantine 3, Algérie*

Le monde connaît un développement technique très rapide et le retour à la nature est devenu de plus en plus rare. Toutefois, j'ai vu plusieurs documentaires qui montrent des hommes qui partaient vivre entre les bras chaleureux de la nature. Je me suis dit que c'est une expérience qui mérite d'être vécue, la nature est pour moi et ma génération quelque chose de méconnu.

Alors j'ai décidé de prendre un rendez-vous avec la nature pour faire sa connaissance et la maison de mon grand-père qui se situe en pleine nature était l'endroit idéal. Après la mort de ma grand-mère, mon grand-père a refusé de quitter sa maison faite en brique traditionnelle et vivre chez ses enfants. Une fois arrivé je lui ai parlé des objectifs de ma visite et il était très content. Je me suis fait un programme de huit rendez-vous, autrement dit, chaque weekend pour un mois. A chaque rendez-vous j'apprends une nouvelle chose et j'attendrai toujours avec impatience l'arrivée du prochain. Je dois me servir, je fais tout avec mes mains et j'utilise tout ce que la nature me donne. Pour allumer le feu il faut des herbes sèches en été et les excréments des animaux secs en hiver, pour préserver la nourriture il faut enterrer une jarre de poterie et y mettre la nourriture, pour dormir et se couvrir il faut travailler la peau des animaux et tricoter sa laine, pour manger il faut cultiver la terre et récolter quelques bonnes herbes offertes par la nature et les cuire dans des ustensiles de poterie faits à la main à partir de l'argile tels que le Tajine, pour boire il faut ramener l'eau tout seul de la source, le lait se transforme en beurre, fromage et l'ben grâce à une Chakwa qui est faite de la peau de la chèvre, on y met le lait et on agite pour avoir le beurre, pour se soigner il faut

préparer des remèdes à base des plantes que mon grand-père apprend par coeur comme j'apprends les familles des médicaments.

Ce que j'ai appris a largement dépassé mes attentes car je n'ai pas uniquement fait la connaissance de la nature mais j'étais son élève tout ce temps. Elle était le maître, le médecin et le protecteur pour moi. À la fin de chaque rendez-vous je me sentais différent, quelque chose a changé en moi. Je suis devenu organisé, persévérant, patient, active et je ne me reconnus plus. J'ai appris que la nature est le berceau de toute la connaissance humaine, c'est une encyclopédie encore vierge qui attend toujours d'être découverte.

J'ai partagé mon expérience avec mes camarades, mes voisins, mes cousins. J'ai voulu que tout le monde apprenne ce que j'ai appris. En été je suis retourné avec quelques amis et cousins à moi. Cette fois-ci nous avons mis une grande pancarte à l'entrée de la forêt où « un rendez-vous avec la nature » était écrit en grand et en gras. Ceci a attiré l'attention des gens qui viennent à la forêt. Nous leur avons expliqué de quoi s'agit-il et la majorité était enthousiaste pour avoir son premier rendez-vous.

Ce ne sont pas tous les rendez-vous qui peuvent changer votre vie mais celui que vous prendrez avec la nature va certainement le faire. Il pourrait être un peu difficile de tout quitter et s'installer en plein nature et ceci n'était pas mon objectif. Ce que je cherchais était d'inviter les gens à découvrir leur origine, d'être l'élève de la nature pour une journée et j'en suis certain qu'ils vont demander d'autres. En étant un étudiant en pharmacie, j'étais stupéfait par la médecine naturelle que mon grand-père exerçait. Je me souviens même de ma grand-mère qui soignait des femmes stériles grâce à la nature et celles-ci reviennent des mois plus tard, un bébé dans les bras pour le montrer à ma grand-mère et la remercier.

Je le dis haut et fort, l'avenir est dans la nature, et tout ce que l'homme a pu découvrir jusqu'à aujourd'hui n'est qu'une petite partie de cette encyclopédie. Un rendez-vous avec la nature est gratuit n'hésitez pas à prendre le vôtre le plus tôt possible et découvrez les secrets de la nature.

## **A Date with Nature**

(English translation)

The world knows a very fast technical development and returning to nature has become more and more rare. Nevertheless, I have seen several documentaries which show human beings who went to live in the warm embrace of nature. I told to myself that this is an experience which deserves to be lived, nature being for me and my generation something disregarded. So I decided to have a date with nature in order to get acquainted with it, and the house of my grand-father which is located in the midst of nature was the ideal location.

After the passing of my grandmother, my grandfather refused to leave his home made of traditional brick and to live with his children. Once arrived at his home, I told him about the objectives of my visit and he was very happy. I created myself a program of eight dates with nature, in other words, every weekend for one month. At every date I am learning something new and I will always wait impatiently for the arrival of the next date. If I want to obtain something from nature, I do everything with my hands and I use everything what nature gives me. To light the fire there is the need of dry herbs in the summer and of animal's dry excrements in winter. In order to conserve the food, we must bury a jar of pottery with food in it. In order to sleep and cover ourselves, we must work the skin of animals and knit wool. In order to eat, we have to cultivate the land and harvest some good herbs offered by nature, and cook them in handmade clay pottery utensils such as Tajine. In order to drink, we have to bring water by ourselves back from the source. The milk turns into butter and cheese thanks to Chakwa, which is made of goat skin. We put milk into it and shake to have butter. In order to cure ourselves, we have to some prepare some herbal remedies my grandfather knows by heart as I learn the families of drugs.

What I learned has far exceeded my expectations because I did not only have an appointment with nature, but I was its student all the time. Nature was my teacher, my doctor and my protector. At the end of each date I felt different, something has changed in me. I became organized, persistent, patient, active and I didn't recognize myself anymore the way I was before. I learned that nature is the cradle

of all human knowledge, Nature is a still virgin encyclopedia, always waiting to be discovered.

I shared my experience with my friends, my neighbors, my cousins. I wanted everyone to know what I've learned. In the summer I went back with some friends and cousins to my grand-father's house. This time we put a large sign at the entrance to the forest where "A Date with Nature" was written on it in large and bold letters. This has caught the attention of people who came to the forest. We explained to them what our initiative consists of and the majority (of the visitors) was enthusiastic to have its first date with nature.

Not all your appointments can change your life, but the ones you will take with nature will certainly do. It might be a little bit difficult to leave everything behind and to settle completely within nature. Actually this was not my objective. What I tried to do was to invite people to discover their origin, to be a student of nature for one day and I am sure that they will ask for more dates with nature. Being a pharmacy student, I was amazed by the natural medicine my grandfather made use of. I even remember my grandmother who was treating barren women with natural herbs and these women come back months later to my grandmother, showing her their baby in order to show him to my grandmother and to express their gratitude to her.

I say it loud and clear, the future is to be in nature, and everything human species has discovered until nowadays is only a small portion of this encyclopedia. A date with nature is free of charge. Do not hesitate to take your date as early as possible and to discover the secrets of nature.



## **Standing Tall like a Mountain**

(Original)

*Tsewang Nuru Sherpa*

*(Age 21, Nepal)*

*Nami College, Kathmandu*

I was born in the lap of the Himalayas, in the land of Sherpa's. Playing in the field and sketching on the muddy floor, days faded by. Life was so good during those days, waking up to the mild breeze and spending my entire day taking long walks to the nearby forest. Every day, I would discover that my tiny village was so much larger than I imagined it to be. Fascinated by my new discoveries, I was always motivated to walk further into the woods to discover what lay on another side of the hill. Sometimes, I would be mesmerized by the strong rushing of rivers, and other days I would be dumbfounded to bestow the humongous conical tree. I was completely oblivious about my future, only dreaming about soaring through the clear, blue sky and wanting to be free like a bird that swooped past us sometimes. Having spent around 2 years of my life in my village, I finally landed in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. With my arrival in Kathmandu, a new life dawned upon me.

Here I was, standing alone in the hallway of my new school, then in a corner of the dining room. Everything seemed to shadow over me, new place, new faces, awkward smiles and abrupt conversations. I was lost in my own world, only reminiscing the pleasure and magic I had while standing proudly on the top of a rock like a roaring Simba. I felt like a cut-down tree or an animal that was isolated from the jungle. I was bullied in my new school, for having a very distinct Himalayan facial structure. Every moment I got bullied, I thought about those animals that were teased at the zoos. At night, I would stare at the dark sky and would ponder on the pattern of a glimmering sky.

Trees become susceptible to different changes. The autumn welcomes the tree by changing the green leaves to red. When winter arrives, the leaves fall. Amidst all these changes, trees stand tall, deeply rooted by spreading the branches of vulnerability. Just like these trees, I build a strong receptive to new beginnings of my life. Amidst all the bullies, I stood tall and firm like mountains of my village. I believe it was my Himalayan instinct that allowed me to come out of my comfort zone to speak about my religion and express my rich mountain culture. Like a free bird soaring through the sky by spreading its wings, I took a risk to speak freely about my culture during school programs. I started flowing like a river. With the overflowing currents of the river, my dreams grew bigger. As the river finally met an ocean, my dreams of conserving the nature became more real. I'm an environmental science student now, with an aspiration to contribute to the conservation of the environment.

When the earthquake shook Nepal in 2015, its catastrophic power turned my village into the thick pile of rubble. However, after going through such severe calamity, we have learned to face the adversity with strong will power and mental toughness. I believe these events have made me grateful for the life I'm living as it taught me about being resilient in times of adverse adversities. I believe natural disasters such as this, enlightens us about the power of our existence and how we should use this power to educate and pass on our learnings to the ones who are less unfortunate to acquire education, like a river flowing from high altitude to low.

We will never have the constant protection of the river banks, but in order for us to make our dream bigger, we have to sail into the vast stretches of ocean to conquer our life and dreams. I owe all my success so far to the valuable time I've spent in nature during my childhood as it has transformed my life into a wild rollercoaster ride. No mountains are too high and no obstacles are too difficult to overcome. Thus, as long as the sun is shining, I will continue learning from nature to stand tall like a mountain.

## 2017 International Essay Contest for Young People Entries by Region

Region	Children's Category	Youth Category	Entries	Percentage (%)
Japan	2,583	1,832	4,415	28.6
Asia (other than Japan)	1,212	4,212	5,424	35.1
The Pacific	30	43	73	0.5
The Middle East	56	100	156	1.0
Europe	395	1,147	1,542	10.0
Africa	287	1,325	1,612	10.4
North America	108	222	330	2.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	267	1,622	1,889	12.2
Total	4,938	10,503	15,441	100.0

